

No. 36.

The Hon. H. A. ATKINSON to the AGENT-GENERAL.

(No. 378.)

SIR,—

Immigration Office, Wellington, 22nd December, 1874.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, No. 1624, of 23rd September ultimo, enclosing a number of memoranda by the Despatching Officer, in reply to certain complaints affecting his department contained in letters and reports forwarded from this office.

I have submitted Mr. Smith's memoranda to the several Boards of Commissioners whose reports are commented upon, and I forward for your information copies of their remarks thereupon, which, after a careful perusal, I am of opinion are entirely borne out by the circumstances of the several cases involved, and justify, to the fullest extent, the original remarks in their reports, which, being with regard to matters of fact, are not in any way disposed of by counter assertions on the part of the Despatching Officer, who, however he may justify the warm eulogiums expressed in your letter, can hardly be in as good a position to judge of the state and condition of ships and their passengers upon arrival as the Commissioners who visit and inspect them, and who have the opportunity of obtaining from the surgeon-superintendent, the officers of the ship, and passengers, the fullest information as to the details of the voyage.

It is apparently necessary to remind Mr. Smith that the object of the inspection of the fittings, plumbers' work, &c., of the ships before sailing, is to insure these being of a serviceable character during the voyage. Experience has proved that this, in many instances, has not been the case, and the statements so often reiterated in Mr. Smith's remarks that everything was satisfactory upon inspection do not meet the case. I cannot but express my regret that instead of endeavouring to remedy defects which have been pointed out by the officers of this department in the colony, the Despatching Officer is satisfied with maintaining that everything is right, and that no possible improvement is practicable or desirable, and that any inconvenient statements of fact which may appear in the Commissioners' reports are not consistent with truth.

With regard to the medical inspection and care of the health of the emigrants, I would point out to you that if Mr. Smith's propositions, especially as expressed in his remarks upon the "Woodlark" report, are to be accepted, the logical deduction is that it is a necessary contingent upon emigration to this colony that 17 per cent. of infants and 4 per cent. of children under twelve should die upon the passage. This is the death rate calculated from the ships which have arrived in this colony since 1st January, 1874.

The Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

I have, &c.,

H. A. ATKINSON.

Enclosures in No. 36.

MEMORANDA by IMMIGRATION COMMISSIONERS.

"QUEEN OF THE NORTH."

Re Water-closets for Married People's Compartments below deck.—In support of the Commissioners' opinion, we beg to quote an extract from A. C. Collison's (surgeon of the "Queen of the North") report: "I would beg to recommend that there should be a water-closet in the married people's compartment, for the use of the women in bad weather."

"SCHIEHALLION."

Re Lighting and Ventilation of the Single Girls' Department.—The statement made by Mr. Smith is not satisfactory, and we are of the same opinion as expressed in report.

G. T. FANNIN,
J. M. TABUTEAU, } Commissioners.
THOS. HITCHINGS, }

Napier, 15th December, 1874.

REMARKS UPON THE DESPATCHING OFFICER'S REPORTS to the AGENT-GENERAL, with reference to the undermentioned Immigrant Ships.

"DOUGLAS."

SURGEON-SUPERINTENDENT TUCK reported to the Immigration Commissioners, upon his arrival in Wellington, that the children's stores had been deficient, and produced his journal as evidence of the truth of his report. He also produced sufficient evidence to show that the ship had not completed her fittings at the time the emigrants were embarked.

Re the Surgeon's Cabin.—There can be no doubt that the cabin occupied by the McDonald family would have been more convenient for the surgeon than the one he had. The Commissioners pass over, without remark, the serious charge made by the Despatching Officer against Surgeon Tuck's integrity, as it is not supported by any evidence, and as that gentleman has no opportunity of defending himself.

"DUKE OF EDINBURGH."

Re Issuing Room and Surgery.—The Immigration Commissioners do not find any reason for altering their opinion that the issuing room, surgery, &c., should be on deck, notwithstanding the memorandum of Captains Edwin and Johnston; but since that memorandum was written, the Commissioners have not repeated the complaint, as they have no doubt the Government know of some special experience possessed by those gentlemen upon this subject.